

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, YE

SUBJECT: YARG IN DISCORD

SUMMARY. THERE IS A RISING LEVEL OF DISCORD WITHIN THE YARG. HAMDI'S POSITION IS NOT THREATENED, BUT HIS COALITION OF SOUTHERNERS AND NORTHERNERS, MODERNIZERS AND TRIBAL FIGURES, RIGHTISTS AND LEFTISTS IS SHOWING SIGNS OF STRAIN AT THE SEAMS. HE IS GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE SOME ADJUSTMENTS WHEN HE RETURNS FROM SRI LANKA, AND COULD CONCEIVABLY EVEN SEEK A NEW GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. HAMDI AND OTHERS HAVE BEEN SHAKEN BY "PLOT" ON PART OF LEFTISTS AND COMMUNISTS TO ASSASSINATE HIM OR OTHER MEMBERS OF COMMAND COUNCIL (SANA 2731). ADJUSTMENTS ARE CONTINUING. HAMDI, FOR INSTANCE, HAS JUST SACKED HIS AMBASSADOR TO SOVIET UNION, HUSAYN AL DAFI'I, A FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF, ALONG WITH MILITARY ATTACHE IN MOSCOW EMBASSY, MAJOR ABDALLAH AL-RAI, AND UNNAMED THIRD MAN IN EMBASSY. THESE HAVE REPORTEDLY VISITED YEMEN SPARATELY IN RECENT ATTEMPTS TO RALLY SUPPORT FOR ACCEPTANCE OF SOVIET ARMS OFFER. IN VIEW OF SOME YEMENIS, THESE TALKS CROSSED THE THIN LINE IN YEMEN BETWEEN POLICY DISCUSSIONS AND CONSPIRACY, AND PROBABLY REFLECT SOVIET MACHINATIONS. THE THREE MEN ARE, IN ANY CASE, NOT JUST BEING WITHDRAWN FROM THEIR PRESENT JOBS BUT RETIRED

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FROM GOVERNMENT SERVICE. (DAFILI'S REPLACEMENT WILL BE

MODERATE ALI AL-MATTARI, PRESENTLY AMBASSADOR IN ROME.)

2. STEPS LIKE THIS IMPERIL HAMDI'S EFFORTS TO MOVE HIS GOVERNMENT RIGHTWARD WHILE NOT LOSING CONTACT WITH THE SOVIETS OR THE LEFT. HAMDI HAS ATTEMPTED TO PLACATE WORRIED LEFTISTS, BUT HIS ROLE AS MAN IN THE MIDDLE REASSURES NEITHER SIDE AT MOMENT. LEFT AND RIGHT SEE HIS TOKEN OFFERS OF FUNDS FOR FAMILIES OF IMPRISONED LEFTISTS AS INSINCERE.

3. AHMAD DAHMASH, LONG TIME CRONY AND ONE OF HAMDI'S KEY MEN IN EFFORT TO KEEP LINES OPEN TO LEFT, HAS BEEN IN SULKING MOOD FOR LAST MONTH. WHEN HE COMPLAINED OF ILL HEALTH, RIGHTIST CHIEF OF STAFF AL GHASHMI SUGGESTED HE GO AWAY FOR A LONG CURE IN LONDON SUGGESTING THAT ARRESTS SHOWED THAT WORK OF APPEASING THE LEFT SIMPLY DIDN'T WORK. DAHMASH COMPLAINED THAT HE COULDN'T "REFORM" THE GOVERNMENT WHEN MINISTERS MOVED AT EVERY TURN TO BLOCK HIS EFFORTS. HAMDI QUIETED DAHMASH WITH PERSONAL FIGTS, SENT HIM OFF TO LONDON FOR TREATMENT, AND WHEN DAHMASH RETURNED PREMATURELY SUGGESTED HE REST IN HIS HOUSE. DAHMASH ISN'T COOPERATING. HE TOOK OFF FOR KHAWLAN, HIS HOME STAMPING GROUND, AND HAMDI HAD TO SEND LEFTIST COMMAND COUNCIL MEMBER ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM OFF TO PERSUADE HIM TO COME BACK.

4. NORTHERNER AND TRIBAL FIGURE GHASHMI, WHO HAS NEVER LIKED SOUTHERNER AND ANTI-SHAYKH ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM IS SHOWING NEW SIGNS OF WANTING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. GHASHMI IS SAID TO BE "GETTING AMBITIONS." ABDALLAH IS REPORTED AS BEING VERY CRITICAL OF SHIFT TO SLOW-MOVING U.S. AND FRANCE FOR ARMS WHEN SOVIETS ARE BEATING ON DOOR TO DELIVER HUGE NEW STOCKS. ABDALLAH HAS FRIENDS IN CIRCLES WHICH ARE NOT FAR FROM SOME OF THOSE RECENTLY ARRESTED, AND HE IS, OF COURSE, CHIEF OPEN CONTACT OF YARG WITH SOVIET EMBASSY.

5. WHEN SECURITY CHIEF MOHAMMAD KHAMIS REPORTED AS MUCH, HOWEVER, DOING SO ROUTINELY, HE PROVOKED STORM OF REACTION FROM PRESIDENT AND ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM.

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GHASHMI HAD TO PERSUADE KHAMIS NOT TO RESIGN.

6. NUMEROUS OTHER INSTANCES OF MINISTERIAL BICKERING HAVE COME TO ATTENTION OF EMBASSY. LEVEL OF DISCORD IS CLEARLY AT ALL TIME HIGH FOR HAMDI, AND REMINISCENT OF TIME BEFORE JUNE 13 COUP WHEN IT WAS PERVASIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF IMMOBILISM AND VACILLATION OF ABD AL-RAHMAN AL IRYANI GOVERNMENT. MATTERS ARE FAR FROM THAT SITUATION,

BUT RIGHT/LEFT TENSIONS CLEARLY HAVE REACHED COMMAND COUNCIL AS WELL AS MINISTRIES, AND THREATEN COALITION WHICH HAMDI HAS PUT TOGETHER SO FAR.

7. REASONS FOR THIS GO BEYOND SECURITY ARRESTS AND PERSONAL RIVALRIES.

8. FIRST, PRIME MINISTER IS NOT INCLINED OR ABLE TO REIN IN DISSENT HARD.

9. SECOND PRESENT GOVERNMENT, HAS MEANT THAT -- BY YEMENI STANDARDS -- A RELATIVELY FEW MEN HAVE WORKED TOGETHER FOR A LONG TIME, IN THE PAST DECISION-MAKING IN YEMEN WAS COLLEGIAL. GOVERNMENTS NEVER OUTLASTED A YEAR. SYSTEM REFLECTED AND ABSORBED DISSENSION. HAMDI IS A STATIST WHO IS INTENT ON ONE MAN RULE. HE IS SAILING AGAINST TIDES AND WINDS OF YEMENI PROCLIVITY TO COLLIDE WITH EACH OTHER.

10. THIRD, ALTHOUGH HAMDI HAS DONE A LOT ABOUT POLITICAL EVOLUTION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, A LOT MORE IS NEEDED AND EXPECTED IN YEMEN. AFTER TWO YEARS, SOME CAN SEE SPOTS OF TARNISH ON HAMDI'S MYSTIQUE. FENCE-SITTING, IN PARTICULAR, IS GOING TO BE HARDER AND HARDER TO CARRY OFF.

1. CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF HAMDI'S REGIME ARE STILL INTACT, HOWEVER, HE HAS BENEFITS OF STRONG SAUDI BACKING AND PDRY WEAKNESS. HE HAS A DISUNITED AND SELF-SERVING OPPOSITION. HE HAS A PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH, IN A TIME OF MASSIVE EMIGRATION AND REMITTANCES, IS WORKING CHANGES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND TOWNS OF YEMEN. H HAS AN IMMENSE SELF-CONFIDENCE, PATIENCE AND POLITICAL SKILL.

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12. FOR INSTANCE, MOUJAHID ABU SHUWARIB HAS NOW LEFT THE COUNTRY FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT IN CAIRO. HE APPEARS TO HAVE NO PROMISE OF JOBS AND LITTLE TO SHOW FOR HIS SUBMISSION OTHER THAN AN ENTAGLING STIPEND FROM THE GOVERNMENT. THIS WAS A DEFT PERFORMANCE ON HAMDI'S PART (SANA 2698).

13. BEST SOURCES IN YARG STATE THAT HAMDI IS HIMSELF IN NO TROUBLE, BUT HIS GOVERNMENT SHOWS SIGNS OF COMING APART AT THE SEAMS. INFORMED SOURCES ALSO INSIST NO NEW GOVERNMENT IS IN THE WORKS. WE WONDER ABOUT THE LAST. A RESHUFFLE NOW THAT YARG HAS A NEW BUDGET (AND REPORTEDLY INCREASES IN SAUDI BUDGET SUBSIDIES) IS CONCEIVABLE. A RESHUFFLE MIGHT SERVE TO LET OFF STEAM, GIVE HAMDI MORE TIME. WHATEVER HAMDI DOES, HOWEVER, ON HIS RETURN FROM SRI LANKA, HE WILL HAVE TO ACT TO LOWER THE LEVEL

OF DISCORD.
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